

Juvenile Justice Commission

The New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) is the state agency responsible for providing juvenile rehabilitation and parole services. Established in 1995, the JJC serves to coordinate services and policies affecting delinquent youth throughout the state. From prevention to parole, the JJC is a partner in the entire juvenile justice system. For more information, visit the JJC Web site www.njjc.org.

Highlights

❖ **Medical and Mental Health Reform** —

The Juvenile Justice Commission is now providing in-house medical care to approximately 650 youth in secure facilities. The JJC has also arranged, by contract, for the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey to provide youth in JJC custody with mental health services. The changes are part of an ongoing effort to streamline and enhance the delivery of health care and mental health services throughout the JJC system. Nearly 67 percent of juveniles committed to the JJC are diagnosed with at least one mental health problem including anxiety disorder, post traumatic stress syndrome, depression, and substance abuse.

❖ **The Serious and Violent Offenders Reentry Initiative** —

The JJC has been chosen to receive a "Going Home-The Serious and Violent Offenders Reentry Initiative" grant from the U.S. Department of Justice. The grant will enable the JJC to redesign the parole and transition process for juveniles who are serious and violent offenders. The grant also will allow JJC to give better care and closer attention to those at greatest risk of re-offending.

❖ **Uth Turn** —

Uth Turn provides educational services, vocational training and individual, family, and group counseling sessions. It also features workshops on anger management, social development, and career preparedness. Uth Turn is currently in place to assist young offenders housed at the JJC's Essex Residential Community Home. Uth Turn began in 1999. This is the first time the program has been offered in New Jersey. It was created as a program of the Fund for Community Leadership Development, based at New York Theological Seminary.

❖ **Hopeworks, Inc.** —

Hopeworks uses technology to reach at-risk juveniles or juveniles returning to the community from JJC programs. Through the program, youth learn sought-after career skills, including Web site design and Global Information System (GIS) mapping techniques. The participants receive state-of-the-art instruction, and at the same time develop improved self-respect, self-discipline and respect for others.

❖ **Respond Culinary Program** —

The first class of culinary students graduated in 2004 from Respond, a collaborative vocational program involving the JJC and Respond, Inc., as well as a restaurant trade union. The Respond Culinary Program is an innovative course that provides selected residents from two JJC residential community homes, both located in Camden County, with extensive culinary training. In addition to classroom and hands-on experience, the course includes field trips to major hotel kitchens, and the Sysco Food Show in Philadelphia.



❖ **Community Policing Partnerships** —

JJC's Juvenile Parole & Transitional Services has developed community-policing-related partnerships with six jurisdictions: Elizabeth, Asbury Park, Perth Amboy, New Brunswick, Plainfield, and the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office. The improved communication allows local police to be aware of juveniles in their jurisdictions who are assigned to parole. In turn, police can advise parole officers of incidents or emerging trends that may involve a juvenile parolee, and which may require intervention.

❖ **Simulated College Environment** —

The JJC has formed educational partnerships with Burlington County College and Middlesex County College. The pilot program allows selected JJC youth to participate in a classroom environment much like that found on local county college campuses. The initiative prepares students for the rigors associated with pursuing an educational certification or degree beyond the high school level. Classes are held on-site at the JJC's Johnstone Campus, and at the New Jersey Training School.



From left to right: Rosanne Fairbanks, Director of Administration; John Amberg, Director of Education; Wimson Crespo, Director of Investigations; Howard L. Beyer, Executive Director; Thomas Flanagan, Deputy Director; William Curry, Director/Juvenile Parole & Transitional Services; Brigitte Mitchell-Morton, Director/Secure Care; Lisa Macaluso, Director/Local Programs & Services.

❖ **Gang Awareness and Prevention** —

The JJC's Juvenile Gang Prevention and Intervention Project addresses street gang activity at all levels by treating gang involvement as an addiction. With funding from the state Department of Education, the JJC has developed a cutting-edge gang awareness curriculum — entitled Phoenix — that corresponds with New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards. The workbook-based lessons provide structure and support, and clearly demonstrate the progress of participants. Experienced JJC staff members also conduct gang awareness workshops. In 2004, the JJC's Gang Management unit trained approximately 7,000 law enforcement members, service providers, JJC staff, teachers, parents and juveniles.

❖ **Mental Health Screenings** —

In 2004, the JJC continued phasing in the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI-2) at county detention centers statewide. Juveniles are screened for mental/emotional problems or distress within 72 hours of admission using the standardized MAYSI-2 screening tool. The MAYSI-2 has earned national and international recognition as an effective methodology, and is used in 32 states and seven countries. The use of MAYSI-2 is designed principally to ensure that detention center staff are made aware of, and can respond most effectively to, mental health issues that might impact on a youth in detention, or on those housed with him or her.

With support from the Governor's Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee, the JJC has implemented MAYSI-2 in seven counties, providing them with laptops, software, training, and technical assistance. By the end of 2005, MAYSI-2 will be in use in all 17 county detention centers.

